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SUBJECT: DAS CHRISTENSEN'S MEETING WITH BEIJING  
UNIVERSITY'S WANG JISI AND COLLEAGUES

REF: BEIJING 841 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Daniel Shields.  
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

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¶1. (C) EAP DAS Thomas Christensen expressed concern to leading Beijing University scholars about the implications of China's anti-satellite (ASAT) test. Dean of Beijing University's School of International Studies Wang Jisi (strictly protect) blamed "communication failure" within the Chinese Government for the way China carried out the test. Wang hopes China will soon provide a fuller explanation to the outside world, but before it does so, it must first complete a "great deal of coordination" within the military and between the military and civilian organs. President Hu Jintao was informed of the test in advance, he believed, but the MFA and many others who should have been informed were given no forewarning. Regarding other matters, Wang said tension between the inward-looking "Peaceful Development" concept and the more activist "Harmonious World" policy is an important theme in current Chinese foreign policy debates. Playing up China's role in Sudan, Wang and his colleagues conceded that Darfur is important to Beijing primarily in the context of U.S.-China relations. One scholar was skeptical of the utility of sanctions as a foreign policy tool, including in dealing with the Darfur problem. China's Burma policy has been reflective of more "traditional" reluctance to interfere in the "internal" matters of others, but cooperation between the United States and China on Burma remains possible despite differences at the UN, Wang said. End Summary.

Anti-Satellite Test

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¶2. (C) EAP DAS Thomas Christensen expressed concern to leading Beijing University scholars during a meeting over lunch on February 7 about the implications of China's anti-satellite (ASAT) test. Dean of Beijing University's School of International Studies Wang Jisi blamed a "communication failure" within the Chinese Government for the manner in which China carried out the test. Wang, stressing that he cannot speak for the Chinese Government, said the government realizes the serious consequences resulting from this failure and plans to do something about it. Wang hopes that China will soon provide a fuller, official explanation of the test to the outside world, but before it can do so, it must first complete a "great deal of coordination" within the military and between the military and civilian organs. The

top leadership must also endorse China's response, which will take time. President Hu Jintao was informed of the test in advance, Wang said. Professor Zhu Feng (strictly protect), Director of the International Security Program at Beijing University's School of International Studies, added that the PLA probably did not make clear to President Hu how sensitive the test would be, which only highlights China's poor intergovernmental coordination. The MFA was given no forewarning and many others who should have been informed were not, Wang said. Wang emphasized that he was not addressing whether the test should have been conducted. If there was to be a test, however, it should have been done differently and in a way that allowed China to prepare for its consequences, he said.

13. (C) Once China is prepared to offer a fuller explanation of the test, the well connected Wang said he "guessed" the response would contain the following elements. First, the ASAT test was "technical" in nature, with no strategic or political intentions. Second, the debris caused by the test will not damage other satellites. (Wang conceded this point might be debatable on technical grounds but said it nevertheless is likely to be part of the Chinese position.) Third, "in the short run" China has no intention to conduct further ASAT tests. Fourth, China will reaffirm its "traditional" stance on space issues, including its having no intention of engaging in an arms race in outer space. DAS Christensen underscored to Wang the seriousness of U.S. concerns about the ASAT test and the importance of a fuller explanation from the PRC, noting that China's response to date has been entirely inadequate.

14. (C) Addressing possible motives behind the ASAT test,

BEIJING 00000925 002 OF 004

Professor Jia Qingguo (strictly protect), Vice Dean of Beijing University's School of International Studies, pointed to Chinese concerns about missile defense, maintenance of a credible nuclear deterrent and other countries' anti-satellite capabilities as key rationales. China's possession of anti-satellite weapons technology is not in and of itself a threat, Jia averred, pointing out that other countries such as the United States and Russia have this technical capability. ASAT weapons are China's only counter to the "threat" from the U.S. missile defense (MD) system that includes Japan, he maintained. If China is not going to match the United States in numbers of nuclear weapons, then it must take other steps to ensure a second strike capability. Jia stated that, in the past, he had publicly warned that countries who feel threatened by missile defense will feel compelled to develop ASAT technologies. Finally, Jia claimed, China has been advocating a treaty on the peaceful use of space, but the United States has refused to engage.

15. (C) In reply, DAS Christensen pointed out that the United States had only conducted an ASAT test in the 1980s, at the height of the Cold War and a period in which economies were not so dependent on satellites. The Chinese Government has so far offered no strategic rationale for its test beyond, "don't worry about it," but every country with an advanced economy that relies on satellites is extremely concerned. It makes no sense for China to conduct a test that threatens to militarize space and then somehow argue that the PRC's true intention was to promote a treaty on the peaceful use of space, DAS Christensen noted.

16. (C) Zhu said that for People's Liberation Army (PLA), the ASAT test symbolized the Chinese military's progress in catching up to the United States technologically. The PLA is constantly concerned about its "technological backwardness" vis-a-vis the U.S. military and believes it cannot forever lag completely behind in this area. The PLA has been working on an ASAT capability for "a long time." The PLA underestimated the negative international reaction the test would provoke, Zhu surmised, and likely believed the test was

simply "the PLA's business," involving only "its" missile and "its" satellite. Of course, the PLA was wrong, Zhu stated, commenting that it had been "taught a lesson." DAS Christensen told Zhu that the PLA is likely to be taught a further lesson by the extreme negative reaction its test has provoked internationally.

#### Peaceful Development vs. Harmonious World -----

17. (C) Regarding other matters, Wang described the ongoing tension between China's inward-looking "Peaceful Development" concept and the more activist "Harmonious World" policy. Some Chinese think tanks are still debating which of these concepts is more important for China, Wang said, observing that the Chinese leadership's views fall somewhere between the two ideas. The Harmonious World concept emphasizes China's need to be engaged in issues around the world. The Peaceful Development theory, on the other hand, advocates sticking to a more traditional approach that is inward-looking and opposed to "interference" in the internal affairs of others. China is still feeling its way forward. Beijing knows that it must play a larger role in world affairs and it is doing so. On the North Korean problem, China has found the "right stance," whereas on problems like Iran, China is still "learning" what its correct position should be, Wang stated. He predicted a "step-by-step expansion" of China's role in Sudan, more broadly in Africa, the Islamic world, Russia and elsewhere. China hopes it can help the international community alleviate problems and thereby earn praise as a responsible international player.

#### Darfur -----

18. (C) China's position on Darfur is consistent with the Harmonious World concept, Wang stated, conceding that China's leadership pays close attention to Darfur primarily because it is a U.S. priority and therefore a key issue in U.S.-China relations. DAS Christensen said we want to see China use its influence to convince Khartoum to agree to establishment of a robust hybrid United Nations/African Union peacekeeping force in accordance with the Annan plan. He warned that China's relations with regimes like Sudan, if not used toward

BEIJING 00000925 003 OF 004

positive ends, will seriously harm China's international image. If there is no progress on Darfur, the United States will feel compelled to take stronger measures against Sudan that, while not aimed at China, may impact Chinese interests.

Jia responded that China's relations with countries like Sudan were part of its "hedging" strategy. What alternative does Beijing have, he asked rhetorically, as long as China is treated as an "outsider" and "the other" by much of the developed world?

19. (C) Casting doubt on the effectiveness of sanctions against Sudan, Jia said China has never believed external intervention can solve problems. Intervention often only makes matters worse. While introduction of a hybrid peacekeeping force might be the best policy for Darfur, there may be other options. If the people of Sudan do not think the situation is bad enough to overthrow their own government, then the role external pressure can play is limited. DAS Christensen noted that the situation in Sudan, particularly Darfur, cannot be reduced to the people versus the government. Darfur involves different ethnic groups, armed and unarmed parties, and flagrant human rights abuses on a massive scale. The United States is trying to encourage China to think broadly about international norms and not focus solely on narrow national interests, he stated.

110. (C) Jia pointed out that Sudan is a "new" issue for China and Beijing's recognition of Darfur's importance has been an "evolutionary process" resulting mostly from the prodding of the United States and others. Not too long ago

most Chinese did not even know where Darfur was. Leaders viewed the matter solely as an "internal" Sudanese affair. Zhu highlighted China's efforts to narrow gaps over the hybrid peacekeepers issue, including Chinese UN Permrep Wang Guangya's intervention with the Sudanese in New York. While it is still hard for China to support sanctions, the peacekeepers issue should move quickly. Zhu argued that China must consider its credibility in Africa and therefore cannot change its policy overnight to suddenly become an advocate for intervention and sanctions.

Burma

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¶11. (C) More "traditional" Chinese views reflecting the "Peaceful Development" path have influenced Beijing's Burma policy, Wang said. Burma is more important to China than Darfur, Wang maintained, citing a host of considerations, including economic and trade interests, Burma's common border with China, the presence of KMT remnants in Burma and drug trafficking. The international community is also more divided over Burma than Darfur. Despite our different approaches to the problem, Washington and Beijing should continue dialogue on the issue and cooperation remains possible, Wang said. DAS Christensen agreed, expressing hope that our two sides can find common ground on Burma, despite U.S. disappointment with recent Chinese action at the UN.

New Congress

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¶12. (C) Wang said some in China are extremely concerned about the effect the new Congress may have on U.S.-China relations, but he personally is relatively optimistic. In Wang's view, Capitol Hill does not make foreign policy but can influence it. The new Congress is focused on issues other than China, which gives Beijing some "breathing room" for the time being. Wang expressed the hope that the Chinese government would "be more careful" on issues such as the trade deficit, intellectual property rights, human rights and labor relations that are of particular interest to Congress.

Mil-Mil Dialogue

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¶13. (C) DAS Christensen expressed frustration over PLA foot-dragging on the planned visit to the United States by the Commander of PLA Second Artillery Division. Despite President Bush and President Hu's agreement on the visit, the United States has had trouble getting the PLA to commit to a date. Zhu said one explanation may be "typical" PLA suspicion that "dialogue" is a ploy to force China to "show its cards" and reveal secrets. Another likely reason for the delay, Zhu speculated, is that PLA Second Artillery representatives probably have no idea what to say in the

BEIJING 00000925 004 OF 004

dialogue. Their staffs therefore will likely need a great deal of time to prepare briefing materials, which will require approval from the top levels of the Central Military Commission. DAS Christensen said the Chinese side ought to be able to implement something to which President Hu agreed.

Ye Xiaowen, Criticism of Foreign Leaders

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¶14. (C) Commenting on the recent inflammatory article by Ye Xiaowen, Administrator of China's State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), which mischaracterized U.S. Iraq policy and personally maligned President Bush, Professor Wang noted that "urgent orders" had been issued to stop the story's distribution (reftel). According to Professor Zhu, in a recent meeting at CCTV, he was told that CCTV staff are forbidden from openly criticizing President Bush, or any foreign leader, including Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Professor Wang clarified that criticism of a country's

policies is still permitted, but personal attacks against individual leaders are off limits.

#### Domestic Issues

¶15. (C) A participant in this week's Central Party School study session for provincial and ministerial heads on Jiang Zemin's Selected Works told Wang that he had no clue why high-level cadres were studying Jiang's works. The original topic for the study session reportedly was supposed to be something like the scientific development concept. For some unknown reason, the topic was changed to Jiang's works, Wang said.

¶16. (C) There was "nothing new" in Luo Gan's February 1 article in the Party journal Qiushi, which reportedly criticized foreign involvement in China's legal system and argued for strict Party control of the courts, Professor Wang said. Luo's comments merely reflect the center's "traditional" concerns about these issues, Wang said.

¶17. (U) DAS Christensen cleared this cable.  
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